

Mr. Chairman, I support the Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, and Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Act Reauthorization in hopes that it will be a vehicle for true comprehensive election reform on a national level.

More than 40 years ago the Voting Rights Act was enacted as a direct response to purposeful discrimination that denied many Americans, mostly African American, equal voting rights. Currently only 16 States are covered. I am disappointed that we have not broadened our scope and our vision.

Currently Georgia is considering changes to its voter registration which will fall disproportional on its African American citizens who have long suffered discriminatory practices.

This further proves that discrimination is alive and well in today's society. We must keep the faith with the civil rights struggle. There are a number of demographics, such as low income citizens, who are still targeted by those who shamelessly continue to manipulate the system.

Reauthorizing the Voting Rights Act for another 25 years is questionable considering the changes that should be made to address the political manipulation seen in recent years in elections through redistricting and with voting machines.

For instance, in Texas a politically driven redistricting between censuses altered the political dynamic of a geographic area and its voters. Any professionals in the Justice Department were convinced that the Tom DeLay driven scheme had serious problems but were overridden by the political appointees who were their bosses. In Ohio, during the last Presidential election, inner-city voters had to deal with a purposeful lack of voting machines that led to lines that were hours long. The fact that these issues are not being addressed by this legislation shows its shortcomings and the need for further reform.

We should take a principled stand to make our election process work better for the American public. We need elections that are fair, where every vote is counted, and people have equal access to the polls. Without addressing these concerns this vote is largely a symbolic effort that does little to change the overall distrust with the election process. I hope it improves

during the next steps of the legislative process.